# GUIDANCE
# ON PREPARING

# CORRESPONDENCE, DECISION, AND INFORMATION DOCUMENTS

# FOR THE SECRETARY

BY

Ann Agnew
Executive Secretary to the Department

March 2005

## Table of Contents

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

This Guidance is designed to assist Department officials as they prepare documents for the Secretary's review, decision, and/or signature. It addresses both broad and specific matters related to content, style, and timeliness. For all documents you prepare for the Secretary's signature or review, please remember to use plain English and avoid both jargon and highly technical language.

### Correspondence

The Secretary believes strongly that our overall effectiveness as a Department will be dependent in large measure on effective internal and external communication. A significant piece of this involves how well and how quickly we draft documents for his signature or review.

The quality (responsiveness, clarity, and substance) of our response is critical. It is very important that letters respond in meaningful ways to the issues and questions raised in the correspondence. These letters often serve as important vehicles for communicating the Administration's messages, themes, and initiatives. Please keep this in mind as you draft letters for his signature. The complete guidance on how to prepare correspondence for the Secretary's signature is located in Section A. To facilitate clearance, please pay particular attention to the "Do's and Don'ts."

Timeliness is extremely important. The response goal is 15 business days for all correspondence designated for the Secretary's signature. The Executive Secretariat will continue to prepare biweekly performance reports on overdue correspondence. The timeline for Secretarial signature correspondence is located in Section A-4.

### Action/Decision Memos

I cannot overemphasize the importance of high quality, well developed, and vetted action/decision memos. These documents are key to successful operations and policy making across the Department. Therefore, the content should focus on informing the Secretary about the key issues and options he should consider in making management and policy decisions.

In these memos, please convey the information in as succinct a way as possible. Please see Section B for further direction, and pay particular attention to the "Do's and Don'ts" in Section B-4. I urge you to contact me or my staff if you need clarification or further direction as you prepare individual action/decision memos for the Secretary.

### Information Documents

"Information Alert" documents should be submitted to the Secretary when timeliness and expediency are factors and should be used exclusively for matters of an urgent nature. Since the Secretary's schedule may preclude a face-to-face contact for other important but not urgent matters, “Information Advisory” documents may serve as a suitable substitute. Please note that these documents should be prepared to inform the Secretary, but do not require his immediate and urgent attention. Section C provides direction on when and how to prepare “Information Alert” and “Information Advisory” documents.

**Summary Statements**

All Summary Statements should serve as “stand alone documents” and be no more than one page in length. The OPDIV’s/STAFFDIV’s contact person should be knowledgeable about all substantive issues in the incoming and outgoing letters. Summary Statements accompanying correspondence should provide information on the subject/issues raised by the correspondent, major points in the response, issues of concern that may not be addressed in the response, other pertinent information, and the contact person(s).

**Process Considerations**

The Department intends to make better use of technology to manage its official documents by implementing the System for Enterprise Records and Correspondence Handling (SERCH). By July 2005, SERCH will replace the existing SWIFT system with a state-of-the-art web-based workflow and document management system that has the ability to serve as an HHS enterprise application. Several OPDIVs/STAFFDIVs have already elected to join the SERCH project to handle their own internal correspondence, and I encourage you to contact Star Kline, the HHS SERCH Program Manager, at klines@mail.nih.gov for more information.

SERCH will improve the efficiency and security of the Department’s document management activities by providing improved workflow and document tracking functions and by providing new capabilities that are not available in the existing SWIFT system, including digital signatures. The new digital signature capability will enable senior executives in the OPDIVs/STAFFDIVs to respond to the Secretary’s clearance requests online (including the ability to concur or non-concur and add comments) and to electronically sign documents assigned for their signature rather than signing the paper document or printing it for signature using a signature pen.

Effective with implementation of SERCH, we will implement several other process changes:

- All versions of response documents, including rewrites, should be submitted in Microsoft Word format.
- All documents, regardless of the page length, will be distributed to the OPDIVs/STAFFDIVs via SERCH.
- All response documents, regardless of the page length, will be returned to OS/ES via SERCH. We may ask that you send us response documents with extensive enclosures in paper format in addition to sending them in SERCH.

Recognizing that training is required to use any new system effectively, the HHS SERCH Implementation Team will provide training to the OPDIVs/STAFFDIVs.

## Additional Considerations

A final word about creativity. The Secretary is interested in solutions! Don't hesitate to offer them. If a correspondent asks for help in a way we can't provide, try to develop an alternative to solving their problem or addressing their need. For decision memos, explore and present options that promote the Administration's policy and budgetary priorities. Look for ways to tackle issues, reconcile competing demands, take advantage of administrative flexibilities and promote synergies among programs throughout the Department, not just in your OPDIV/STAFFDIV.

## What Follows

The following sections are meant to provide further clarity and examples. Please review them carefully. You should pay particular attention to the "Do's and Don'ts" sections, the formats for action memos and the formats for Summary Statements. As times goes on, we may amend or further refine these directions.

If you need further clarification and assistance, please contact Lisa Foley Farmer at (202) 690-6392.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation.

Ann C. Agnew

# Section A

## Correspondence for the Signature of the Secretary:

1. Guidelines for Correspondence for the Signature of the Secretary
2. Illustration - Summary Statement for Secretarial Correspondence
3. Secretarial Correspondence Do's and Don'ts
4. Secretarial Signature Correspondence Timelines (In "Business Days")

# A-1. GUIDELINES FOR CORRESPONDENCE FOR THE SIGNATURE OF THE SECRETARY

Responses to incoming letters should be as brief as possible, written in plain English and not contain highly technical language or jargon. For the vast majority of responses, one page should suffice. Letters longer than one and a half pages will not be signed and will be returned to the authorizing agency for rewrite. However, in cases where additional detailed information needs to be provided, an enclosure may be used. If, in order to be responsive, an extremely technical response is required, OS/ES may request that a brief Secretarial response be prepared, followed by the more detailed information in a letter from the appropriate agency head.

It is important that accompanying Summary Statements follow strictly the format of Section A-2 and, in a crisp/concise one-page presentation, describe the major points in both the incoming and outgoing letters. The “Do’s and Don’ts” that appear in Section A-3 are meant to clarify style preferences and should be followed closely. Strict adherence to them will facilitate transmitting letters to the Secretary and help avoid delays associated with rewrites.

Please also use the Summary Statement as a vehicle to provide additional information relevant to the particular correspondence. Try to anticipate questions the Secretary might ask. Also, if good reasons exist for not responding to particular issues in the incoming letter, provide these in the “other pertinent information” section. See the example in Section A-2.

Secretarial correspondence that is assigned for Direct Reply: Secretarial correspondence that is received from congressional, Federal and State officials needs to be prepared for the signature of the Head of the Agency only. This policy also applies to Secretarial correspondence received by international officials, major organizations and individuals of notable leadership position.

Other Secretarial correspondence forwarded to an agency for direct reply may be assigned to the office that is determined by the Head of the Agency to be the most appropriate.

Items transmitted to the Secretary’s office for response, for example White House referrals, should properly acknowledge the referral of the letter in the written reply.

## A-2. ILLUSTRATION - SUMMARY STATEMENT for SECRETARIAL CORRESPONDENCE

**NAME OF CORRESPONDENT:** Representative Ed Whitfield (R-KY)

**SUBJECT/ISSUES RAISED BY CORRESPONDENT:**

Congressman Whitfield's letter expressed concerns about the following audiology services.

- He wants CMS to use the same definition of an audiologist in both the Medicare and Medicaid programs.
- He also wants CMS to no longer require physician supervision of audiologists for performing vestibular tests.
- He wants CMS to use the same medical necessity criteria for audiology tests that are used for ophthalmology tests.

**MAJOR POINTS IN THE RESPONSE:**

CMS is currently looking into options to bring the two program requirements into closer conformity including a change in the current Medicaid regulation governing audiology services. However, CMS does not plan to use the same definition of an audiologist for the Medicaid program as is used in the Medicare program, because most States do no require licensure for audiologists who serve Medicaid children in school-based settings. Finally, CMS has recently issued two Medicare program memoranda that would remove the physician-supervision requirement for vestibular tests, and it would use the same medical necessity criteria for both audiology and ophthalmology tests.

**OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:**

The Medicaid program relies on a certificate of clinical competence from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association - unlike the Medicare program - which defers to State licensure to define an audiologist. Most States also provide Medicaid services to children at school-based settings and CMS does not believe it is prudent to create a two-tiered system of care by using a definition of an audiologist for the Medicaid program that defers to State law as in the Medicare program.

**CONTACT PERSONS:**

X Y, OS/ES, 202-205-xxxx
W Z, CMS 410-786-xxxx

1" margins all around

**Illustration**
**Single-page Letter**

THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

Start on line 7

(Do Not Date)

The Honorable John A. Doe
Secretary of the Interior
Washington, DC 20012

Insert 2 spaces

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Indent

This is a sample of a single-page letter for the signature of the Secretary.

Use the Secretary's letterhead. It should be used <u>only</u> for correspondence prepared for the signature of the Secretary.

The Secretary's letters generally should be limited to one page and should be written in brief, concise language. Mention an enclosure in the body of the letter if one is being used.

Single space all letters: double space between paragraphs. Use Times New Roman typeface and font size twelve. Indent at the beginning of each paragraph. One inch margins should border the top, bottom, left and right of the document.

Insert 2 spaces between sentences

Use "Sincerely" as the complimentary close and type the Secretary's name.

Envelopes printed with "THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES" in the upper left corner are to be used for Secretarial letters.

Set tab 3"

Sincerely,

Insert 4 blank lines

1" margin

Michael O. Leavitt

Enclosure

## A-3. SECRETARIAL CORRESPONDENCE DO'S + DON'TS

| Do's | Don'ts |
|---|---|
| • Above all else, be responsive to the correspondent's concerns. Try to put yourself in the place of the person receiving the response. Would you be satisfied? | |
| • Indent 5 spaces for each beginning paragraph. | |
| | • Apologize for a late response. |
| • Be brief. Keep responses to one page. An enclosure may be used to supply additional information if absolutely necessary. | • Include lengthy paragraphs describing technical matters in great depth. |
| • Use Plain English. Keep sentences and paragraphs short, where possible. | • Use technical language or jargon. (except when absolutely necessary and only when fully explained.). |
| • In the first sentence, thank the correspondent for providing the Secretary with his/her views on the subject of the inquiry. In the second sentence, thank the correspondent for any congratulatory or personal statement to the Secretary . | • Repeat the entire, lengthy question that was posed in the incoming letter (i.e. "You inquired about....."). |
| | • Refer to the date of the incoming letter or refer to the incoming letter as "recent." |
| • Use the response as an opportunity to inform the correspondent about any of the following if applicable/relevant:<br>- approved funding increases in a program of concern<br>- approved new initiatives<br>- recent announcements<br>- an upcoming event | |
| • Use only Times New Roman typeface, font size 12. | |
| • End all Congressional and Gubernatorial correspondence with "Please call me if you have any further thoughts or questions." If | |

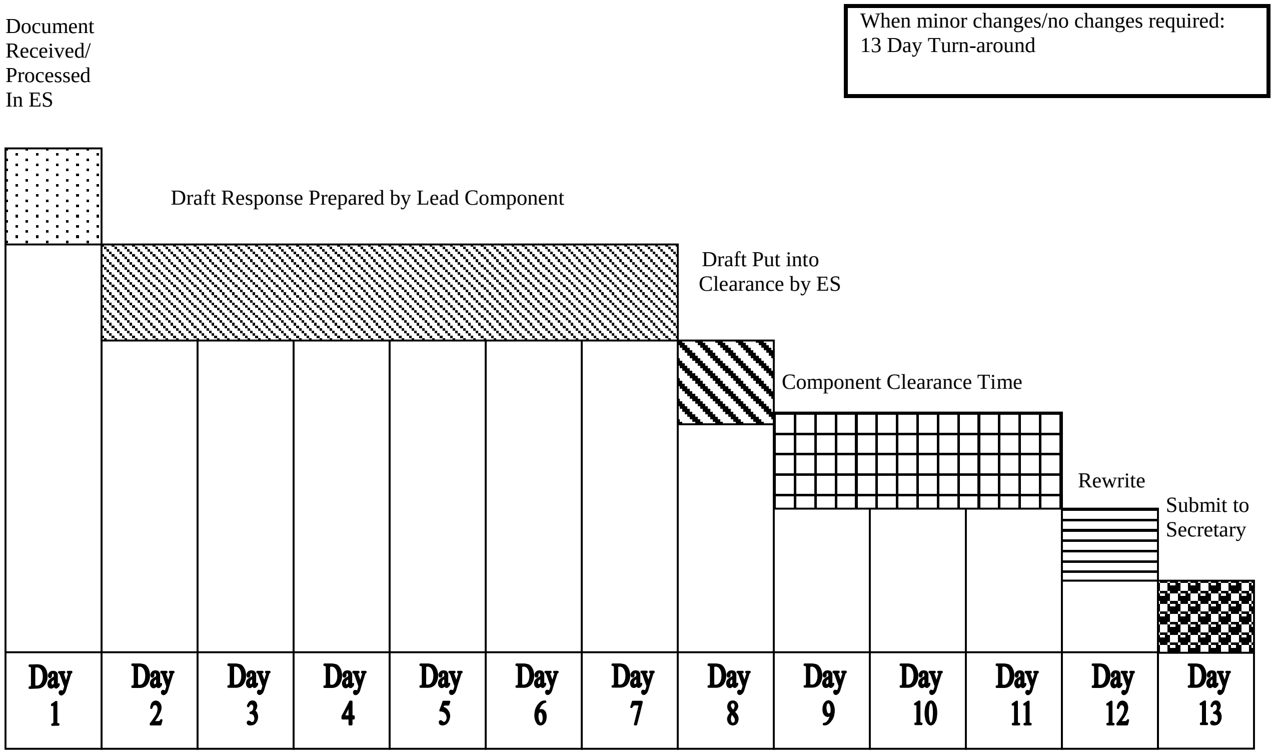
| Do's | Don'ts |
| --- | --- |
| appropriate, add such expressions as: "I look forward to working with you on this issue." | |
| • When preparing Secretarial responses for Direct Reply, acknowledge that you are directly responding for the Secretary. Example, "Secretary Leavitt has asked me to thank you for your letter regarding the Department's final Privacy Rule and to respond to you directly." | |
| | • Sound defensive. |
| | • Overuse the word "that." |
| • Give the good news, a positive message or alternative solution upfront. | • Bury the good news at the end of the letter. |
| • Make sure Summary Statements are easy-to-read, clearly define the purpose of the document, and put the issue in context. | • Lift paragraphs directly from the document and define them as a Summary Statement. |
| • Use the following sentence if an incoming letter is co-signed by more than one person: "I also will provide this response to ..." | • Use the following sentence if an incoming letter is co-signed by more than one person: "A similar letter is being sent to ... " |
| • Use active voice frequently, e.g. "CMS monitors health quality." | • Overuse passive voice, e.g. "Health quality is monitored by CMS." |
| • Use the word "I" when the Secretary is making a personal statement. Example: "I appreciated learning about your new program." | • Use the word "we" when the Secretary is making personal statement. Example: "We understand that you have a concern about..." |
| • Use the word "enclosure" when enclosing material to the letter. | • Use the word "attachment" when enclosing material. |
| • If appropriate, identify in the response a specific individual who will follow up when additional information is needed or when additional action must be taken. Example: "I have asked (name, title, phone) to contact you with additional information about this grant program." | • Instruct the correspondent to call someone for further information. |

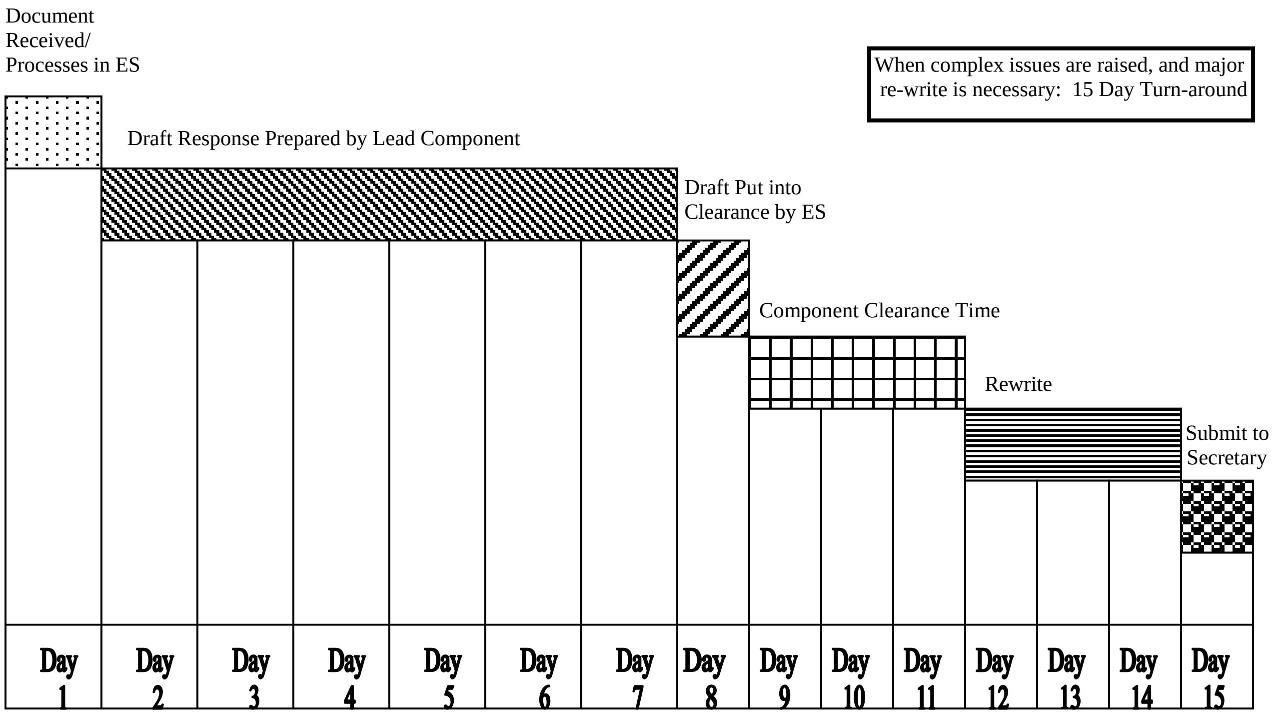
| Do's | Don'ts |
|---|---|
| • When applicable, provide specific time frames in answering questions about when a certain "event" (grant award, report, meeting, etc.) will occur. | |
| • Spell out the word "percent." | • Use the % symbol. |
| • When referring to a date use only the number (e.g., December 14). | • When referring to a date use the number followed by a $^{th}$ (e.g., December 14$^{th}$). |
| • Prepare an interim response only in rare cases (e.g., when, because of the unavailability of data, a substantive response cannot be prepared now but could be prepared within a specified, short time-frame). In any such case, be certain a follow-up response is sent. | • Use an interim response simply as a means to achieve the 15 business-day correspondence response goal. |
| **Use common sense and good judgement when applying any of the above conventions.** | |

## A-4. SECRETARIAL SIGNATURE CORRESPONDENCE TIMELINES

Secretarial Signature Correspondence Timelines

(In "Business Days")




(IN "BUSINESS DAYS")

# Section B

## Preparation of Action/Decision Memoranda for the Secretary:

1. Guidelines for the Preparation of Action/Decision Memoranda for the Secretary

2. Illustration – Simple Action Memorandum

3. Summary of Report/Plan

4. Illustration – Complex Action Memorandum

5. Action/Decision Memorandum Do's and Don'ts

## B-1. GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF ACTION/DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

Action memos may take one of two forms. A simple action memorandum may be used to obtain approval to release a report, obtain agreement to issue a "housekeeping" or non-controversial regulation, seek a decision on attending a meeting, etc. A simple action memo, addressing a single straight-forward issue should not exceed two pages and should follow the format of Section B-2. In cases in which approval is sought to issue a lengthy report, plan or other document, include an abbreviated summary, if possible in matrix format (see example at Section B-3), and two copies of the report.

A complex action memorandum involves presentation of an issue that is not straight-forward and for which a variety of alternatives or options need to be presented. The format and instructions for preparing a complex action memo are presented in Section B-4. The key to a complex action memo is the clear presentation of the issue and background, and the development of options, with pros and cons for each option presented. Start at the beginning and put in context of what needs to be done and the outcome. Additionally, options must be presented in a neutral fashion so as not to "tilt" towards any given option. Likewise, pros and cons should be balanced. Provide a recommendation and a basis for it. These and other "Do's and Don'ts" for Action/Decision memos can be found in Section B-5.

## B-2. ILLUSTRATION- ACTION MEMORANDUM (SIMPLE)

TO: The Secretary
Through: DS __________
COS __________
ES __________

FROM: Assistant Secretary for Budget, Technology and Finance

SUBJECT: How to Prepare a Simple Action Memorandum **– ACTION**

Action Requested by: xx/xx/xx

ISSUE

This section should contain a concise statement (preferably one sentence or short paragraph) of the issue or problem.

DISCUSSION

This section should contain pertinent information regarding the origin, background and implications of the issue or problem. It should also contain a brief statement explaining why the "Action Requested By:" date should be met.

A simple Action Memorandum should be limited to two pages or less. Lengthy relevant background material, when necessary, should be submitted in the form of tabbed attachments.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend you approve...

DECISION

This section should contain appropriate decision lines for the addressee's use.

Approved______________________Disapproved_______________Date___________

(Signing Official's Name)

Attachment:
Tab A - Background Material

# B-3. SUMMARY OF REPORT/PLAN

| BSE/TSE Action Plan | | |
|---|---|---|
| Action | Actions Already Underway | Actions to Be Taken |
| Surveillance (CDC) | • Expanded infection control recommendations to protect patients and healthcare workers from transmission of TSE<br><br>• Established contacts with national and local health officials dealing with BSE in other countries | • Enhance technical assistance to State and local health personnel to expand ability to identify and investigate possible cases of TSE<br><br>• Develop laboratory capacity at CDC main campus by the end of FY 2003 to provide analytic support for health investigations and conduct research on how to improve such investigations |
| Protection (FDA) | • In partnership with USDA preventing exposure of public to TSE through food products<br><br>• Continuing policies to prevent potential BSE exposure through blood transfusion and tissue transplantation | • Expand existing programs as appropriate |
| Research (NIH) | • Increased research efforts to:<br>(1) Understand the prions that cause TSE;<br>(2) Determine how TSEs are transmitted among animal species and between species;<br>(3) Develop diagnostic tests for animals and humans using tissues and blood; and<br>(4) Design drug therapy<br><br>• Expanded resources and efforts for basic and applied TSE research | • Consider, in consultation with OS, establishing prizes to be awarded to the first person or organization to:<br>(1) develop a CJD/vCJD screening test, and obtain approval from the FDA for such a test<br><br>• Double or, if possible triple current spending for TSE research by the end of FY 2002 |

# B-4. ILLUSTRATION- ACTION MEMORANDUM (COMPLEX)

TO: The Secretary
Through: DS __________
COS __________
ES __________

FROM: Assistant Secretary for Budget, Technology and Finance

SUBJECT: How to Prepare a Complex Action Memorandum – ACTION
Action Requested by: xx/xx/xx

ISSUE

This section should contain a concise statement (preferably one sentence or short paragraph) of the issue(s) or problem(s).

BACKGROUND

This section should contain pertinent information regarding the origin, background and implications of the issue(s) or problem(s).

This section should also contain a brief statement explaining why the “Action Requested By:” date should be met.

The text should be single spaced; double space between paragraphs.

OPTIONS AND DISCUSSION

1. OPTION: Each option should be listed in a clear and concise manner.

DISCUSSION: Following each option, there should be a discussion section that should include information about who would benefit if the option were chosen, who would be adversely affected, what would be the anticipated reaction of those affected, and how much the option will cost in terms of dollars, staff and administrative responsibilities. The pros and cons of each option should follow.

Pros:

- ❍
- ❍
- ❍
- ❍

Cons:

- ❍
- ❍
- ❍
- ❍

2. OPTION:______________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

DISCUSSION:______________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Pros:

- ❍
- ❍
- ❍
- ❍
- ❍

Cons:

- ❍
- ❍
- ❍
- ❍
- ❍

RECOMMENDATION

Provide a recommendation regarding the suggested course of action. When several issues have been presented, a recommendation for each set of options should be made.

DECISION

1. OPTION: Each option or recommendation should be listed with appropriate approval/disapproval lines for the addressee's use.

   Approved_______________________Disapproved_________________Date__________

2. OPTION:____________________________________________________________

Approved____________________Disapproved_______________Date__________
(If you approve this option, please sign the letter at Tab B.)

(Signing Official's Name)

2 Attachments:

Tab A - Copy of Report on......

Tab B - Letter to Senator Smith

## B-5. ACTION/DECISION MEMORANDUM DO'S + DON'TS

| Do's | Don'ts |
|---|---|
| • Provide a clear and concise explanation of the issue requiring a decision (preferably a short paragraph of the issue/problem). | |
| • Provide framework for decision to be made in the form of chronological background information. | • Overwhelm the presentation with details. |
| • Provide a minimum of two options. | |
| | • Provide "unbalanced" options. |
| | • Tilt towards any option in the presentation. |
| • Include in the options discussion anticipated reactions from external groups (Congress, industry, States, etc.). | |
| • Provide cost of options if available/applicable. | |
| • Provide a minimum of two pros and two cons for each option. | |
| • Present pros and cons in a balanced fashion. | • Provide an unbalanced set of pros and cons. |
| | • Discuss "political" implications. |
| • Use the word "attachment" when attaching material. | • Use the word "enclosure" when attaching material. |
| • Provide a date/time-frame in which a decision is required only if a true time constraint exists (explain time constraint in the "discussion" section). | • Provide a date/time-frame unless a true constraint exists. |
| • Make the case for selecting a particular option in the "Recommendation" section. | |

# Section C

## "Information Alert"/"Information Advisory" Documents for the Secretary:

1. Guidelines for "Information Alert"/"Information Advisory" Documents for the Secretary
2. Illustration – Information Alert
3. Illustration – Information Advisory
4. Information Alert/Information Advisory Do's and Don'ts

# C-1. GUIDELINES FOR “INFORMATION ALERT” AND “INFORMATION ADVISORY” DOCUMENTS FOR THE SECRETARY

Information Alert

These documents should be submitted to the Secretary when timeliness and expediency are factors and should be used exclusively for matters of an urgent nature. Examples of situations/issues where an “Information Alert” should be prepared include:

- an important public health or safety problem has been identified;
- new information has just been obtained about a major issue of concern to the Secretary or the White House;
- a sensitive press/media story is imminent.

Questions may arise as to the appropriate length/format of the document. In all cases, an “Information Alert” should only contain a few bullets and follow the format in Section C-2. Please note that “Information Alerts” are designed to describe: the issue/problem, why it is critical for the Secretary to have the information now, and what the Department is doing/planning/proposing to do to address the issue/problem. When necessary, provide additional information as an attachment. These and other “Do’s and Don’ts” for “Information Alert” documents can be found in Section C-4.

Information Advisory

Since the Secretary’s schedule may preclude a face-to-face contact even though a matter of importance presents itself, “Information Advisory” documents may serve as a suitable substitute. In lieu of meetings with or presentations to the Secretary, OPDIVS/STAFFDIVS may be asked or may choose to submit an “Information Advisory” document. Use judgement when preparing them and make clear why the Secretary needs to have the information. Please note that these documents should be prepared for events/situations that may or are likely to arise in the near-term.

An “Information Advisory” should be no longer than 2 pages and follow the bulleted format in Section C-3. Please note that an “Information Advisory” is designed to describe: the issue/problem, some background, and what the Department is doing/planning/proposing to do to address the issue/problem. When necessary, provide additional information as an attachment. These and other “Do’s and Don’ts” for an “Information Advisory” documents can be found in Section C-4.

Transmitting Other Information

There will be other information that an OPDIV/STAFFDIV may want to provide to the Secretary's office that does not meet the criteria for an "Information Alert" or "Information Advisory." Such information should be transmitted with a short cover memo to the attention of the Executive Secretary, who will then forward it to appropriate senior officials. The cover memo should summarize briefly the nature of the information provided and the intended audience.

## C-2. ILLUSTRATION - INFORMATION ALERT

### INFORMATION ALERT

**DATE:** June 21, 2001

**SUBJECT/LEAD COMPONENT:** Human Plague/CDC

**WHY THIS INFORMATION IS CRITICAL NOW:** In Colorado Springs, Colorado, a suspected human death from the bubonic plague has just been identified and will receive nationwide media attention beginning tonight.

**SUMMARY OF ISSUE AND DEPARTMENT RESPONSE/ACTIONS:**

- Plague-related deaths of prairie dogs and a suspected fatal case of bubonic plague in a 28-year-old male have occurred today in Colorado Springs. While plague-related prairie dog deaths along Colorado's Front Range are not unusual, a human death may be cause for concern.

- The Colorado Springs Gazette plans to report in tomorrow's edition that health officials are investigating the death of a man who lived near the prairie dog colony. CNN has inquired about the incident. We expect coverage on tonight's news.

- The local health department has taken appropriate measures to reduce risk of human exposures. CDC will collaborate with local and State public health authorities to respond to this outbreak by sending epidemiologists to Colorado Springs tonight.

**CONTACT:** A B, ES, (202) 205-xxxx/ K L, CDC, (404) 639-xxxx

## C-3. ILLUSTRATION - INFORMATION ADVISORY

### INFORMATION ADVISORY

**Date:** April 2, 2001

**SUBJECT/LEAD COMPONENT:** West Nile Virus (WNV)/CDC

**WHY THIS INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT FOR THE SECRETARY:** The "transmission season" for WNV starts in the East in May and media attention is likely over the course of the next 1-3 months.

**SUMMARY OF ISSUE, BACKGROUND, AND DEPARTMENT RESPONSE/ACTIONS:**

- WNV is a mosquito-borne virus (its natural host is birds) that produces a range of disease in humans, from unapparent or mild infection to fatal encephalitis and meningitis. Unapparent/mild infections are estimated to occur much more frequently than severe cases, with the elderly and immunocompromised persons likely to develop severe illness. Congress has appropriated funds for surveillance and control of WNV in affected States. CDC is the lead Federal agency to respond to the WNV outbreak.

- Illness as a result of the WNV has generated considerable concern from Congress, the press and the general public. Pesticides used to control the mosquito population have raised awareness and anxiety related to this illness.

- In 1999, 62 cases of WNV related severe human illness (average age-66 years), including 7 fatalities were identified in New York City (NYC) and surrounding counties of New York State. The outbreak was quickly brought under control through wide-scale spraying of adult mosquitoes in NYC and public education campaigns focused on ways to minimize risk of exposure to mosquitoes.

- In 2000, the virus reappeared with intense activity over a wider geographic area. More than 4,000 positive birds were identified in 12 States and D.C.; however, only 21 human infections (19 severe and two less severe infections), with two fatalities, were identified.

- New York State and CDC believe they have identified a "risk index" related to frequency of dead bird sightings that may be predictive of when human illness is imminent. Involved States plan to use this index to reserve the use of pesticides for situations wherein their use is essential to protect human health.

- As the transmission season for exposure approaches, CDC will continue to work in collaboration with our Federal, State, and local partners to monitor for evidence of the presence of the virus in new geographic areas, as well as in previously affected areas.

- If an outbreak occurs all involved States and localities plan to implement "Integrated Pest Management" which involves activities to reduce adult mosquitos and their breeding sites, provide public education, and when conditions warrant, spray pesticides.

**CONTACT:** M N, ES, 202/O P, CDC, (404) 639-xxxx

## C-4. "INFORMATION ALERT" AND "INFORMATION ADVISORY" DO'S + DON'TS

| Do's | Don'ts |
|---|---|
| • Use an "Information Alert" for matters of an urgent nature that require the Secretary's immediate attention. | • Use an "Information Alert" or "Information Advisory" when simple transmission of a document/information through the Executive Secretary is all that is needed. |
| • Use an "Information Advisory" to inform the Secretary about an important matter that does not require his immediate attention. | |
| • Convey information not meeting the criteria for an "Information Alert" or "Information Advisory" to the Executive Secretary using a short cover memo. | |
| • Describe why the information being conveyed through an "Information Alert" is of an urgent nature and what actions your OPDIV/STAFFDIV is proposing to address the issue/problem. | |
| | • Use excessively technical language. |
| • Keep an "Information Alert" to a few bulleted points. | |
| • Keep an "Information Advisory" to no more than 2 pages using a bulleted format. | |
| | • Use an "Information Alert" or "Information Advisory" in cases where a Secretarial action/decision memorandum is more appropriate. |
| • Indicate if there is press, congressional, or White House interest. | |
| • Advise the Secretary of any other concern or controversy surrounding the issue. | |
| • For an "Information Alert" or "Information Advisory,"add an attachment when necessary. | |

# Section D

## Clearance Do’s and Don’ts

1. Clearance of Secretarial Correspondence Do’s and Don’ts

## D-1. CLEARANCE OF SECRETARIAL CORRESPONDENCE DO'S + DON'TS

| Do's | Don'ts |
|---|---|
| • Provide concurrence, concurrence with comments, nonconcurrence (include adequate explanation), or statement of no objection within 3 business days. | • Request extensions. |
| • Try to settle issues at OPDIV/STAFFDIV level before submitting non-concurrences. | • Assume that the clearance form does not need to be completed if you concur or have no objection. |
| • Add quality. | • Focus on editing/edit to your style. |
| • Review for technical accuracy. | |
| • Review for internal consistency, consistency with prior statements on the issue, and consistency with Administration policy. | |
| • Advise immediately if a critical OPDIV/STAFFDIV has not been included in the clearance process. | |
| • Request a meeting to facilitate resolution of issues. | • Request a face-to-face meeting if a teleconference will suffice. |
| • Send comments back via SWIFT. | • Send comments back via paper/e-mail. |
| • Ensure that the clearing official's name is included. | |